

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2005-06

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Education
(SC-Ed)

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

Published Documents

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

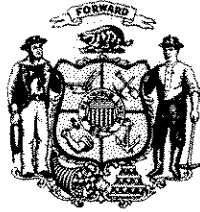
**

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

➤ **05hr_ab0084_SC-Ed_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 14 2006 (hand delivered at 4:00 PM)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

Please consider the following items and vote on the motions below. Return this ballot to Senator Luther Olsen, Room 5 South, no later than 12:00pm, February 16, 2006. Committee members' ballots not received by the deadline will be marked as not voting.

Assembly Bill 84:

Relating to: the number of school days required each school term

Introduced by Representatives Towns Jensen, Hundertmark, Hines, Townsend, Lehman, Gottlieb, Gunderson, Petrowski, Gronemus, Wood, F. Lasee, Kreibich, Friske, Vrakas, Hahn, Jeskewitz, Nischke, Kerkman, Owens, Musser, Van Roy, Gielow, Moulton, Lothian, Vruwink, Vukmir; cosponsored by Senators Kedzie, Grothman, Reynolds and Lassa

Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye X No _____

STATE CAPITOL

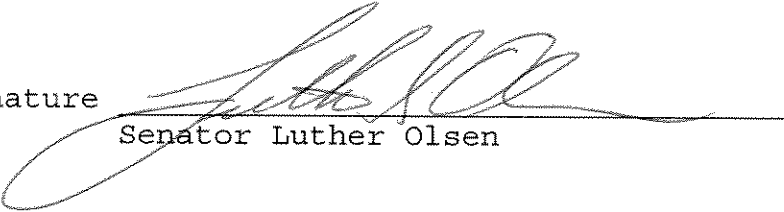
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

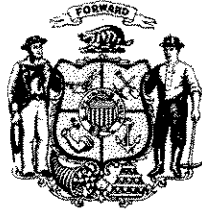
Aye X No

Signature


Senator Luther Olsen

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Alberta Darling, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

Please consider the following items and vote on the motions below. Return this ballot to Senator Luther Olsen, Room 5 South, no later than 12:00pm, February 16, 2006. Committee members' ballots not received by the deadline will be marked as not voting.

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Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye X No _____

STATE CAPITOL

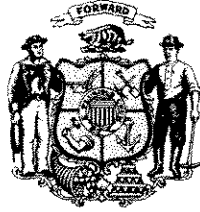
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

Aye X No

Signature Alberta Darling
Senator Alberta Darling



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

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Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye X No

STATE CAPITOL

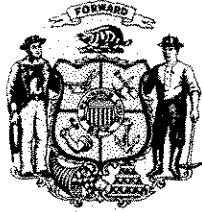
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

Aye X No

Signature Sheila Harsdorf
Senator Sheila Harsdorf



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Glenn Grothman, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

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Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye X No


STATE CAPITOL

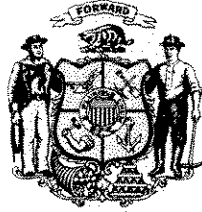
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

Aye ☒ No ☐

Signature 
 Senator Glenn Grothman



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Bob Jauch, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

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Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye X No

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

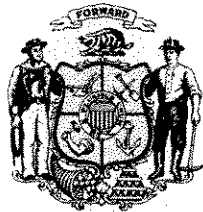
- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

Aye _____ No X

Signature 
Senator Bob Jauch

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Dave Hansen, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

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Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye ✓ No

STATE CAPITOL

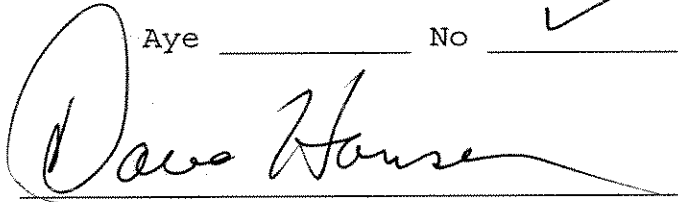
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

Aye _____ No ✓

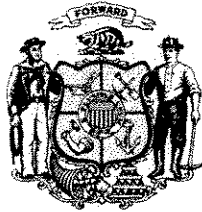
Signature



Senator Dave Hansen

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882



Wisconsin State Legislature

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Jon Erpenbach, Senate Committee on Education

FR: Senator Luther Olsen, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

DT: February, 15 2006 (hand delivered)

RE: Paper Ballot for AB 84

Please consider the following items and vote on the motions below. Return this ballot to Senator Luther Olsen, Room 5 South, no later than 12:00pm, February 16, 2006. Committee members' ballots not received by the deadline will be marked as not voting.

Assembly Bill 84:

Relating to: the number of school days required each school term

Introduced by Representatives Towns Jensen, Hundertmark, Hines, Townsend, Lehman, Gottlieb, Gunderson, Petrowski, Gronemus, Wood, F. Lasee, Kreibich, Friske, Vrakas, Hahn, Jeskewitz, Nischke, Kerkman, Owens, Musser, Van Roy, Gielow, Moulton, Lothian, Vruwink, Vukmir; cosponsored by Senators Kedzie, Grothman, Reynolds and Lassa

Please consider the following motion:

- Moved by Senator Olsen that SENATE AMENDMENT 1 to ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be recommended for adoption:

Aye ☒ No ☐

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

Wisconsin State Senate

- Moved by Senator Olsen that ASSEMBLY BILL 84 be concurred as amended:

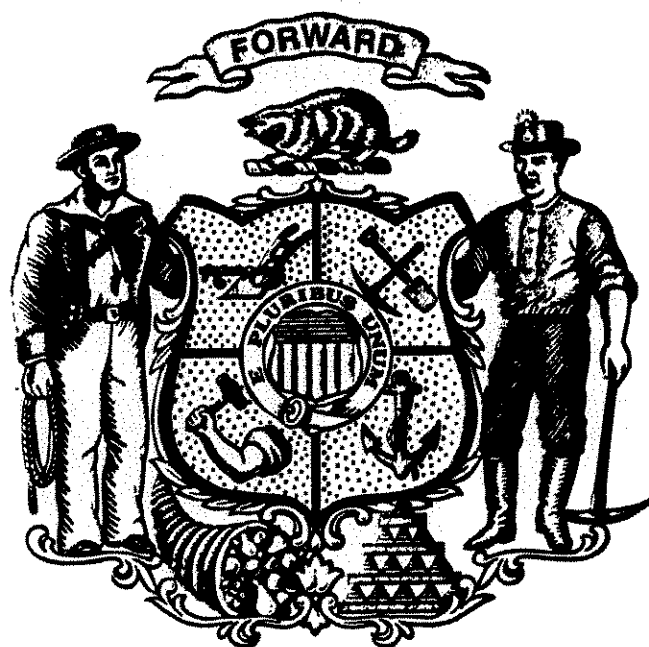
Aye _____ No ✓

Signature _____

Senator Jon Erpenbach

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882



October 18, 2005

Testimony to senate education committee hearing for AB 84:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Assembly Bill 84.

We are from the Whitewater Unified School District and we come as an example of a school district that sought a waiver from the 180 day requirement as a means of providing flexibility within our working calendar to address some identified needs of safety, quality of professional development and school costs.

Within the 180 student contact days our calendar included 6 half days used for professional development. Students attended school in the morning and then were released around noon. Faculty and staff spent the afternoon in professional development activities. These 6 half days "counted" as part of the 180 instructional days because students were present for part of the day, however, the arrangement posed some difficulties.

First, the community raised concerns about having all students released into the community at one time 6 days during the year. Police and business owners reported far more problematic incidents with students during these 6 days than any during the year. Teachers reported that although students had contact time for half the day, in fact, those 6 days were less productive than normal because they were different, usually with different schedules and with students anticipating their release at noon.

Second the professional development arrangement was not as productive as it could be. Although it was one-half day of in-service, it was really less than that by the time buildings were cleared and all students accounted for. Also, teachers were coming to professional development activities after having already completed a half day of instruction that many found to be more strenuous because of the change in the day than many full days would be.

Third, the half days still had the same busing costs because students still needed to be transported to and from school on those 6 half-days just as they would be on full days.

In 2003-4, a calendar committee consisting of teachers and administrators proposed that the district seek a waiver from the 180-day rule to turn the 6 half days into 3 full days of professional development. The waiver was necessary because, although the students would be attending school the same amount of time, that time would now be spread over 177 days rather than 180 as required by statute. During 2004-5 the paperwork for the waiver was pursued and in March, 2005 the waiver was approved.

This September we had our first of 3 full-day inservices. The absence of complaints from the community about students on the loose was obvious. The faculty commented that it was a much more productive professional development day, in fact one that many commented they were looking forward to because they could concentrate on the learning

and activities of the day without feeling the exhaustion from the hurried morning instructional activity.

So far we see this calendar change as a significant improvement in our year. It was achieved with a waiver. However, we believe this is an area of flexibility that should be a given for school districts. Both the time and the day requirements were instituted as part of the original Wisconsin 20 standards designed to bring uniformity to school programs. The standard requiring a plan for professional development was why many school districts implemented half days to address the need for professional development. Since that time the Model Academic Standards, the Adequate Yearly Progress requirement and other stipulations that school districts must address have set standards for outcomes for districts to meet. Though retaining the specification of the amount of instructional hours required for a school year does make sense, the stipulation for the number of days may no longer be necessary.

Today how that amount of time is distributed across the year should be a local decision. Local districts face issues unique to their particular situations. All are trying to provide the best educational opportunities for their students. Most need to meet increased federal and state mandates often with the same or fewer staff. The number of days of instruction is one area in which local districts should be able to make the decisions best for their area without going through the hassle of seeking a waiver. Although seeking a waiver WHEN YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED is not a huge undertaking, it is one of those kinds of tasks that you don't know all that is involved until you get into doing it. Therefore it does consume a large amount of time and energy that is better spent on the multitude of other tasks related to providing quality education for students.

The concern raised that schools will be packing students into long days and short weeks to save money if this day requirement is removed, ignores the fact that local school decisions are made by boards elected by the local populace and responsive to the local voters. Decisions made by boards are scrutinized, perhaps more so now than in times past. Parents have considerable choice in schools and programs today and are seemingly more likely to question to choices made in schools. School districts should have the statutory right to make a local decision about the number of days students attend school to respond to local needs and concerns and they should be able to do this without having to ask permission of a regulatory body.

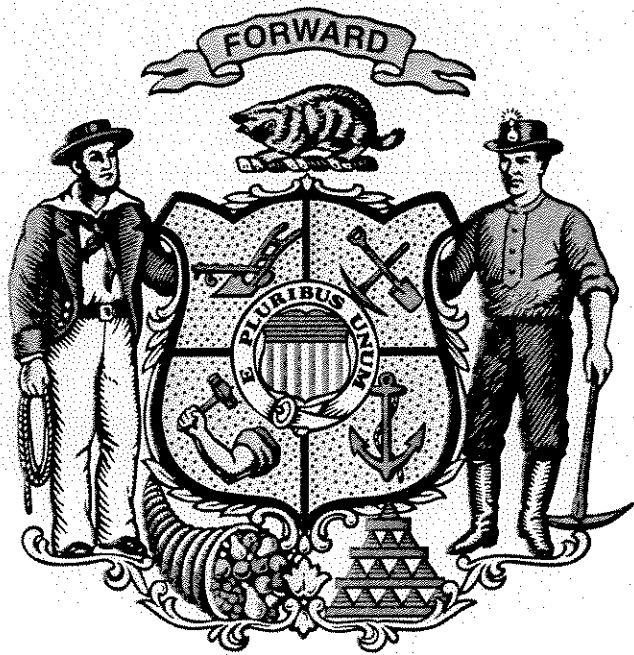
Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Presented by

Dr. Leslie Steinhaus, District Administrator

And

Roni Telfer, Curriculum/Staff Development Coordinator



School District of Janesville

527 South Franklin Street, Janesville, WI 53548 – Phone: (608) 743-5000

October 18, 2005

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee re. AB-84

by John W. Eyster, Legislative Liaison, School District of Janesville. Home address: 122 East Cox Road, Edgerton, WI 53534.

Chairperson Senator Olsen - THANK YOU for holding this Hearing on AB-184 today.

I am here because I have been directed by the Board of Education of the School District of Janesville to support AB-84 as its Legislative Liaison. I am John Eyster.

The School District of Janesville has been advocating for this bill since it was introduced. Board President and Chair of the Board's Legislative Committee, Virginia Wyss, appeared before the Assembly Education Committee originally supporting AB-395 in the 2003-05 session and then earlier in this session (March 22, 2005) supporting the re-introduced bill as AB-84 in this session. The Board filed a resolution with the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) advocating the 180-day repeal bill. The Resolution was adopted by the WASB Delegate Assembly.

The focus of the Board's interest in this bill is LOCAL CONTROL. The top priority set by the Board is that decisions re. K-12 public education ought to be made by locally elected school boards within the framework of basic/minimal state mandates. The Janesville Board is convinced that the mandate of the HOURS for direct instructional time is key. The Janesville Board believes that each local school district ought to have the ability to accommodate the local situation to schedule the hours. The Board notes that it is elected by the citizens of the local school district which means that it attuned to local needs and preferences.

The testimony on behalf of Rep. Towns provides the key points which the Janesville Board supports noting that the bill is PASSIVE – there is no mandate whatsoever for change – the 180-day format can be maintained by a district if that is best for the local situation. At the same time, new flexibility is offered for local school districts who wish to optimize educational time.

- more -

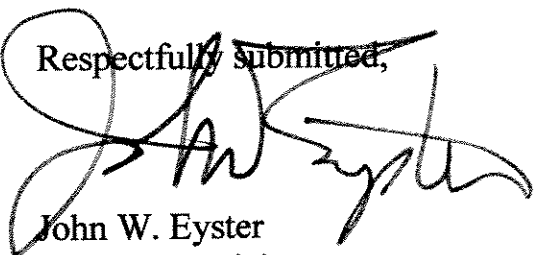
You will hear from the School District of Whitewater describing the creative schedule providing for better scheduling of state mandated in-service time for improved educational time. I can tell you that the School District of Janesville is giving serious consideration to this model. Dr. Steinhaus, Superintendent in Whitewater, has developed a plan which manages several issues related to in-service time and community needs, especially to eliminate the ½ day schedule for in-service time.

We are well aware of the status quo system which provides for a waiver to be approved by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. We are also well aware of the situation which Dr. Steinhaus had to endure with delays and “games” which indicate that DPI is NOT forthcoming on processing such waivers. We do not understand why it is necessary to play the game of “Captain May I” with DPI. Our Board is elected by taxpaying citizens of the district and is a group of adult citizens who make important public policy decisions for the district. Are they not mature and competent enough to make such a public policy decision? Does DPI have greater maturity or wisdom? Who knows the local situation the BEST?

Having talked with school board members involved in various school districts, I have heard numerous creative and very responsible ways that they would be able to use this flexibility to enrich the education of their children and youth as well as manage the limited financial resources of the local school district more effectively. Please vote to give them this opportunity to be responsible and efficient managers of quality public education. I am happy to be able to present you with a letter from Dr. Bette Lang, Superintendent, Stevens Point Area School District, in support of AB-84 (attached).

I will be happy to respond to your questions. THANK YOU for your consideration and follow-up.

Respectfully submitted,



John W. Eyster
Legislative Liaison

- END -

Bette A. Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent
Bliss Educational Services Center
1900 Polk Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481
715-345-5444 fax 715-345-7302



STEVENS POINT
AREA PUBLIC
SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 17, 2005

To Senate Education Committee – Senator Luther Olsen, Chair:

The Stevens Point Area Public School District wishes to support AB-84 which eliminates the requirement for school to be held 180 days. The district covers the majority of Portage County. It buses approximately 6500 students each day during the school year. Annual transportation costs for the last three years are as follows:

2002-03	\$2,757,539
2003-04	\$2,976,554
2004-05	\$2,973,668

The district is expecting a \$115,000 shortfall the 2005-2006 school year due to high fuel costs.

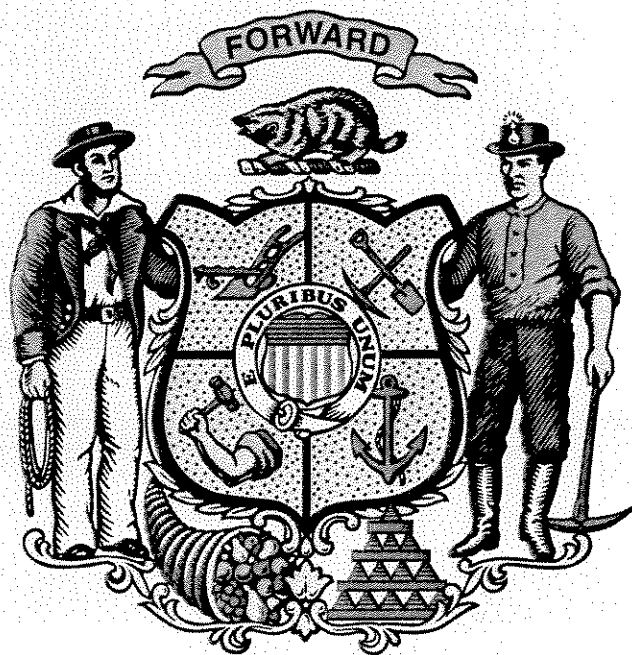
The opportunity to reduce the number of days of face-to-face instruction while meeting the required hours of instruction would allow the district to consider lengthening the school days and reducing the number of days that students would need to be transported to school. Each day that our buses run costs the district \$8,970 in labor, fuel and contracted costs.

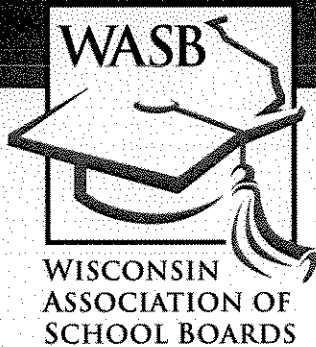
Thank you for giving serious consideration to allowing the School Board the latitude to consider requiring fewer face-to-face days as an option to reduce the operational costs of transporting approximately 86% of its students, while maintaining or increasing the instructional hours requirement.

Sincerely,

Bette Lang

Bette Lang, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools





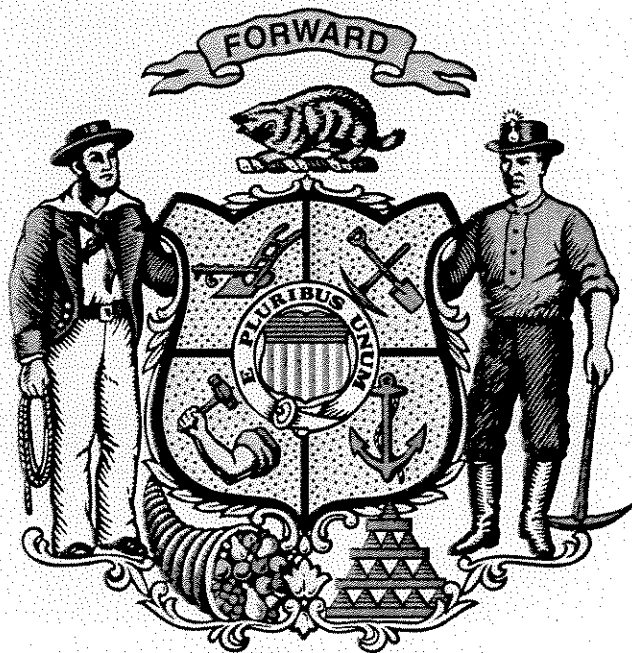
122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
 PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

JOHN ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Senate Education Committee
 FROM: Jeff Pertl, Legislative Services Coordinator
 DATE: October 18, 2005
 RE: Summary of positions

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) strongly supports AB 84, SB 151, SB 327 and SB 384. The WASB will provide supplementary information on AB 84 and SB 280. Thank you for your consideration.

Bill	Description	Position
AB 84	Provides flexibility on the number of school days required each school term, while maintaining the current hours of instruction required. <i>(See specific position paper)</i>	Supports
SB 151	Permits an educational agency to refuse to employ or to terminate from employment an unpardoned felon.	Supports
SB 229	Allows school boards to grant high school physical education credit for extracurricular sports if the pupil earns an additional 1.5 credits in another academic subject.	Monitoring
SB 280	Prohibits pupils who take prohibited substances or engage in certain practices from participating in interscholastic athletics. <i>(See informational paper)</i>	Monitoring
SB 327	Requires districts to provide performance reports to parents only upon request and to post them on the district's Internet site if possible.	Supports
SB 361	Makes technical changes to state statutes relating to fingerprint cards for background checks and to reflect the name change of the Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools.	No position
SB-382	Requires districts to transport pupils, who live outside the school district due to a joint custody arrangement, to and from an agreed-upon location within the district.	Monitoring
SB-383	Makes technical modifications to the laws governing transportation of children with disabilities.	Monitoring
SB-384	Counts pupils who attend the Youth Challenge Academy for school district revenue limit purposes	Supports



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Every kid
deserves a
Great School!*

TO: Senate Education Committee
FR: Diane Craney, Government Relations Program Specialist
Wisconsin Education Association Council

RE: Oppose Passage of AB 84 – Repeal of 180 Day Rule

DA: Tuesday October 18, 2005

WEAC believes that including staff in key decisions concerning wages, hours and conditions of employment is an important part of maintaining quality in our great schools. Making changes to the school calendar or to the number of days for instruction and school building operations should remain a subject of local collective bargaining.

Under current law, school is required to be held for at least 180 days during the school term (the time beginning with the first school day and ending with the last school day that the schools are in operation for the attendance of pupils in a school year). In addition, each school board must schedule at least 437 hours of direct pupil instruction in kindergarten, at least 1,050 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 1 to 6, and at least 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 7 to 12. Assembly Bill 84 retains the requirement that school be held for these minimum required hours of instruction and eliminates the requirement that school be held for at least 180 days.

WEAC is opposed to AB 84 because it will not improve academic achievement:

- Current law allows local school districts to request a waiver of the 180-day requirement. The DPI reports that, since 1998, there have been only 92 requests to waive the 180-day requirement. Some form of approval was granted in 92% of the cases. This is hardly an outcry for changing the law statewide.
- Most states require 180 days of instruction.
- AB 84 would create further burden for parents in providing their children with safe and secure places when they are not in school. This bill would make that harder, not easier, for parents.
- With families feeling time pressure and everyone concerned about academic performance, our interest should be focused on investing the resources necessary to provide every child a high quality education, including after-school and summer school programs, not finding ways to cut back on our investment, cut back on quality, and cut back on school days.

Stan Johnson, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director

- Although the number of instructional hours will remain the same, the likely result would be no change in educational programming on a day-to-day basis since each class period would be lengthened by potentially just a minute or two to achieve the required number of hours. The cumulative effect, however, could be a loss of one to two weeks. This means that at least one, perhaps two, units or chapters of instruction could be lost or eliminated at a time when we are asking more from our schools, demanding accountability and providing fewer resources.

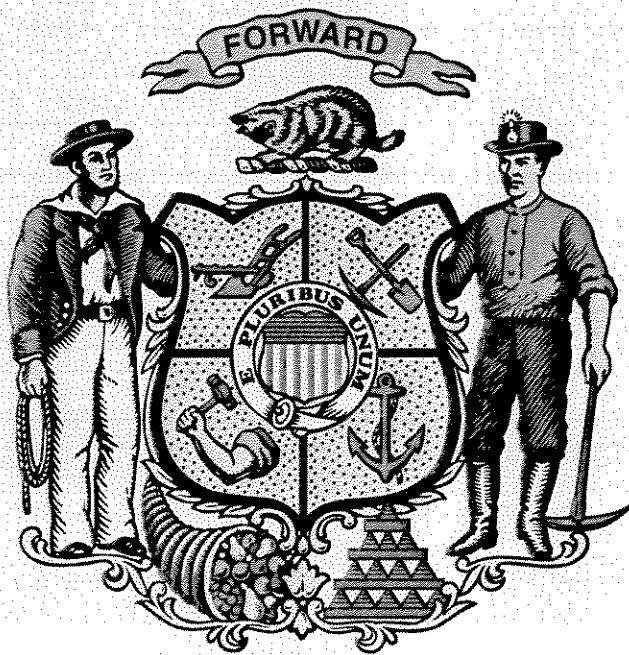
WEAC opposes AB 84 because of concerns regarding collective bargaining, especially for ESP:

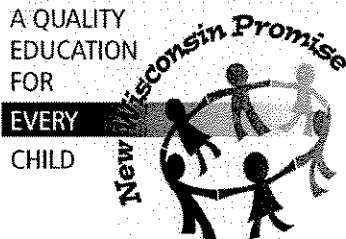
- A reduction in the number of student contact days will likely result in a loss of work hours for Education Support Professionals (ESP). The primary means of saving money would be through eliminating the need for bus drivers, food service, paraprofessionals, security, and some custodial staff on the non-contact days. These savings would come right out of the pockets of our lowest paid staff in public schools.
- Teacher contracts will be the battleground if there is a dispute over the number of workdays. On the other hand, ESP contracts often give the employer wide latitude in regard to assignment of hours. As a result, there is the danger that teacher units could enter into calendar agreements that cause the reduction of ESP member workdays, causing animosity between the affected locals.
- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) sanctions for Title I schools that fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for multiple years can include increasing the length of the day or year. AB 84 could be at odds with ESEA, though ESEA sanctions must be implemented in accordance with local contracts and state laws.

For more information:

Please feel free to contact Diane Craney, Government Relations Program Specialist, with any questions or comments about this memorandum. Diane can be reached by e-mail at craneyd@weac.org or by phone at 608-298-2356. Thank you.

*Every kid
deserves a
Great School!*





State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

October 18, 2005
Senate Committee on Education

Department of Public Instruction Testimony on 2005 Assembly Bill 84

My name is Jennifer Kammerud. I am the Legislative Liaison at the Department of Public Instruction. On behalf of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, thank you Chairperson Olsen and members of the Committee for the opportunity to be here today to testify in opposition to AB 84.

AB 84 eliminates the requirement that school be held for at least 180 days but maintains the requirement that school be held for specified hours.

Since 1998, department staff reports that 92 requests have been made to waive the 180 day requirement. Some form of state approval was granted to locals in 92% of these instances (only seven were denied). Approval is usually given for days needed for in-service or emergencies and are often for five or fewer days. Although elimination of the 180 day requirement may appear to be reasonable, most states require 180 days of instruction. But more importantly, the answer to the budget struggles in our schools should not be taking the low road to providing quality education in Wisconsin. Fewer instructional days will move our state in the wrong direction. We want to be in a place that values education as the key tool in providing everyone in our great state the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

Also of great concern, is the issue of having the state create a further burden for parents in providing their children with safe and secure places when they are not in school. The state's role should be to make things easier for working parents, not harder.

With families feeling time pressure and everyone concerned about academic performance, our interest should be focused on investing the resources necessary to provide every child a high quality education, including after-school and summer school programs, not finding ways to cut back on our investment, cut back on resources, cut back on quality, and cut back on school days.

Although the number of instructional hours will remain the same, the likely result would be no change in educational programming on a day-to-day basis since each class period would be lengthened by potentially just a minute or two to achieve the required number of hours. The cumulative effect, however, could be a loss of one to two weeks of instruction. This means that at least one, perhaps two, units or chapters could be lost or eliminated at a time when we are asking more from our schools, demanding accountability and providing fewer resources.

- The bill sets no limits on the length of a school day. As can be seen in the chart below, children could be in school for unusually long periods of time in order to meet the hour requirements in fewer days. In addition, for some students the lengthened day plus time on the school bus may be too long.
- Even though the bottom line of instructional time over the course of the school year remains the same, the impact on instruction may be significant. See analysis in chart below. Please note:
 1. Current law requires a schedule of 180 days, with up to five days relief (in day count, not hours) for parent conferences and/or inclement weather. Consequently, for all practical purposes, the day and hour requirement falls into a 175 day face-to-face framework for instruction.
 2. Although passing time between classes in grades 7-12 may be counted as instructional time, it was not factored into the display below for the purpose of ease of calculation.

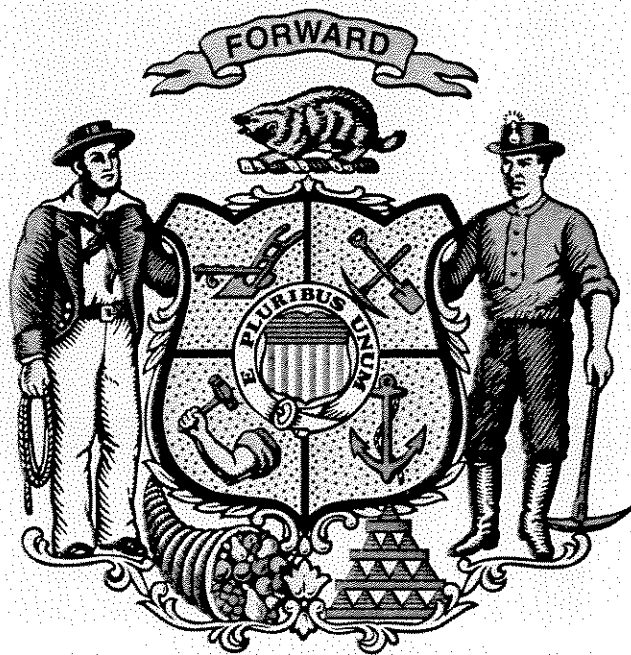
Number of days	Length of Elementary (1-6) School Days without lunch	Total Hours	Length of School Day (Grades 7-12) without lunch	Total Hours	Class Period Length for Grades 7-12 (based on 8 period instructional day)
175 (current law minus 5 relief days)	6 hrs.	1050	6 hrs., 30 min.	1137	49 min.
170	6 hrs., 11 min.	1051	6 hrs., 42 min.	1139	50 min.
165	6 hrs., 22 min.	1050	6 hrs., 54 min.	1138	52 min.
160	6 hrs., 34 min.	1050	7 hrs., 7 min.	1138	53 min.
155	6 hrs., 47 min.	1051	7 hrs., 21 min.	1139	55 min.
140 (4 day week)	7 hrs., 30 min.	1050	8 hrs., 8 min.	1138	61 min.

The instructional impact for grades 7-12 can easily be seen by viewing the last column.

Reducing the number of days from 175 to 170 would result in class sessions which are one minute longer. Further reducing the number of days to 165 would result in classes which are three minutes longer. An extra 1-3 minutes a day will not equate with the lost 5-10 days of new material each day.

Clearly, many members of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards had similar concerns as the resolution supporting the removal of the 180 day requirement barely passed on a vote of 181-175.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.





DEBI TOWNS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
43RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

October 18, 2005

Senator Luther Olsen
5 South, Capitol Building
Madison, WI 53708

Senator Olsen:

This memo is in response to the question you raised in your Senate Hearing yesterday regarding AB 84, the elimination of the 180 day mandate. You had asked why the bill draft included the addition of the below language under Section 11. s. 121.02 (1) (f) 2.

“Scheduled hours under this paragraph may include no more than 35 hours on Sundays.”

To answer your inquiry, this language was not added by Representative Towns, it is already currently included under s. 115.01 (10) (b). I have enclosed the selected statute section for your review. This section pertains to the definition of school days, and as such, our bill would repeal all of s. 115.01 (10). As it was not Representative Towns intention to remove this provision from current statute, the drafting attorneys modified the language to pertain to the hour requirement (35 hours in place of 5 days) and included the language as part of s. 121.02 (1) (f).. Thus, this language is simply a modified version of s. 115.01 (10) (b).

Although I was not initially able to answer your question, I hope this response clarifies your question. If you have further concerns on this matter, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Heather Shea
Legislative Assistant
Office of Representative Towns

Capitol Office:

P. O. Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708-8953
Toll-Free: (888) 534-0043 • (608) 266-9650
Fax: (608) 282-3643 • Rep.Towns@legis.state.wi.us
Website: www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm43/news

43rd Assembly District:

7930 North Eagle Road • Janesville, WI 53548

115.001 STATE SUPERINTENDENT; EDUCATION PROGRAMS

principal or other person who acts as the administrative head of a school district.

(10) **SCHOOL DISTRICT CLERK.** "School district clerk" means the school district clerk of a 3-member school board elected by the electors in a common or union high school district, the school district clerk elected by the school board in a unified, common or union high school district having a school board of more than 3 members and the clerk designated by the school board in a 1st class city school district.

(11) **SCHOOL NURSE.** "School nurse" means a registered nurse licensed under ch. 441 or in a party state, as defined in s. 441.50 (2) (j), who is also certified by the department as being qualified to perform professional nursing services in a public school.

(12) **SCHOOL TERM.** "School term" means the time commencing with the first school day and ending with the last school day that the schools of a school district are in operation for attendance of pupils in a school year, other than for the operation of summer classes.

(13) **SCHOOL YEAR.** "School year" means the time commencing with July 1 and ending with the next succeeding June 30.

(14) **SESSION.** "Session" means the time during a school term that the schools of a school district are operated for the attendance of pupils.

(15) **STATE SUPERINTENDENT.** "State superintendent" means the state superintendent of public instruction.

History: 1983 a. 189 ss. 172, 173, 175 to 177; 1983 a. 512; 1985 a. 225; 1985 a. 332 s. 151; 1987 a. 264; 1989 a. 114; 1991 a. 39; 1993 a. 16; 1995 a. 27 ss. 3846, 9145 (1); 1997 a. 27, 164; 1999 a. 22, 83.

115.01 Classifications. In chs. 115 to 121:

(1) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS.** Public schools are the elementary and high schools supported by public taxation.

(2) **GRADES.** The educational work of the public schools is divided into 12 grades, besides kindergarten, which are numbered from one to 12 beginning with the lowest. The first 8 grades are the elementary grades. Where reference is made to "elementary grades", the reference includes kindergarten, where applicable. Where reference is made to "kindergarten", the reference includes both 4-year-old and 5-year-old kindergarten, except as otherwise specifically provided. The last 4 grades are the high school grades. A middle school is a school in which grades 5 to 8 are taught. A junior high school is a school in which grades 7 to 9 are taught. A senior high school is a school in which grades 10 to 12 are taught. This classification is not a limitation of the character of work or the studies that may be carried on in either the elementary or the high schools.

(3) **SCHOOL DISTRICTS.** The school district is the territorial unit for school administration. School districts are classified as common, union high, unified and 1st class city school districts. A joint school district is one the territory of which is not wholly in one municipality.

(5) **NAME.** (a) Except as provided under par. (b):

1. Each school district shall be known by the designation "School District of" followed by the name of the municipalities in which any high schools operated by the district lie.

2. A school district which does not operate a high school shall be known by number and by the name of the municipalities in which it lies.

(b) A school board may by resolution designate a different name for the school district if the revised name contains the words "school district".

(10) **SCHOOL DAY.** (a) School days are days on which school is actually taught and the following days on which school is not taught:

1. Days on which school is closed by order of the school district administrator because of inclement weather and days on which parent-teacher conferences are held, not to exceed 5 days during the school term.

2. Days on which school is closed by order of a local health officer, as defined in s. 250.01 (5).

(b) Not to exceed 5 Saturdays may be counted as school days in any school year when school is taught thereon with the consent of the school board.

(12) **DISTANCE.** The distance between home and school shall be measured from building to building along the usually traveled route.

(13) **ELECTORS.** (a) Whenever an action may be taken by a percentage of electors in an area, that percentage shall be based on the number of electors who voted for governor at the last general election in that area.

(b) If the area does not coincide with a municipality or part thereof for which election statistics are kept, the number of electors shall be determined as follows:

1. The area of the school district in square miles shall be divided by the area of the municipality in square miles in which it lies.

2. The vote for governor at the last general election in the municipality within which the school district lies shall be multiplied by the quotient determined under subd. 1. to determine the required number of electors.

(c) If a school district is in more than one municipality, the method of determination under par. (b) shall be used for each part of the school district which constitutes only a fractional part of any area for which election statistics are kept.

History: 1973 c. 90; 1975 c. 115, 189; 1977 c. 29, 206; 1979 c. 89, 301; 1983 a. 27, 189; 1985 a. 29, 225, 332; 1987 a. 46; 1993 a. 27.

SUBCHAPTER II

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Cross Reference: See also PI, Wis. adm. code.

115.28 General duties. The state superintendent shall:

(1) **GENERAL SUPERVISION.** Ascertain the condition of the public schools, stimulate interest in education and spread as widely as possible a knowledge of the means and methods which may be employed to improve the schools.

(2) **SECTARIANISM.** Exclude all sectarian books and instruction from the public schools.

(3) **SUPERVISION OF SCHOOLS.** Supervise and inspect the public schools and day schools for children with disabilities, advise the principals and local authorities thereof and give assistance in organizing such schools.

(3m) **SUPERVISION OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES; RULES.** (a) Supervise and audit the receipts and expenditures of the cooperative educational service agencies, conduct program review of the agencies, supervise boundary reorganization where necessary, advise the administrators of the agencies and provide assistance in organizing the agencies throughout the state.

(b) Promulgate rules establishing procedures for the reorganization of cooperative educational service agencies and boundary appeals.

(c) Every 3rd year as scheduled by the department, report to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature under s. 13.172 (3) on all cooperative educational service agency programs and services. The report shall include information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs and services.

(4) **PUBLIC INFORMATION.** By reports, bulletins, circulars, correspondence and public addresses, give the public information upon the different methods of school organization and management and the subject of education generally.

(5) **APPEALS.** Examine and determine all appeals which by law are made to the state superintendent and prescribe rules of practice in respect thereto, not inconsistent with law.

Cross Reference: See also ch. PI 1, Wis. adm. code.

CHAPTER 115

STATE SUPERINTENDENT; GENERAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS; CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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SUBCHAPTER I

GENERAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

115.001 Definitions. In chs. 115 to 121:

(1) **CHARTER SCHOOL.** "Charter school" means a school under contract with a school board under s. 118.40 or with one of the entities under s. 118.40 (2r) (b), or a school established and operated by one of the entities under s. 118.40 (2r) (b).

(2) **DEPARTMENT.** "Department" means the department of public instruction.

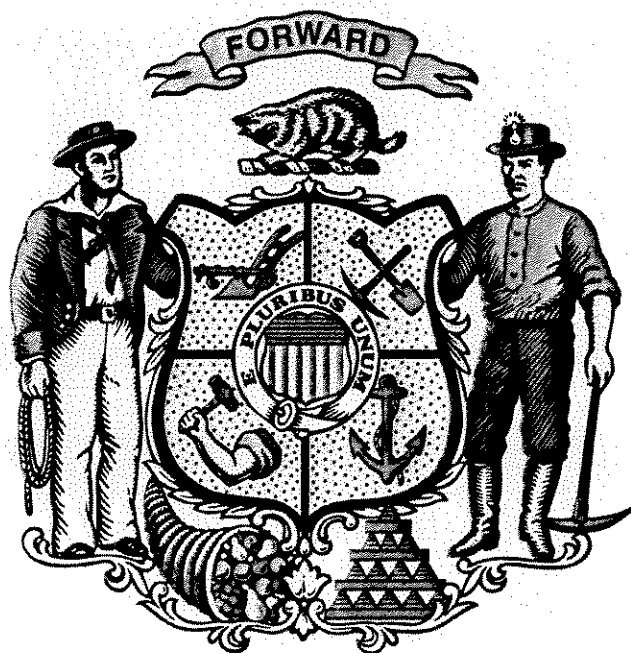
(3) **ENERGY EMERGENCY.** "Energy emergency" means a period of disruption of energy supplies which poses a serious risk to the economic well-being, health or welfare of the citizens of this state, as certified by executive order of the governor.

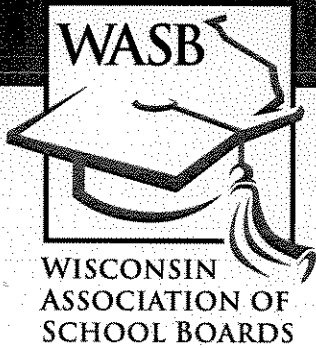
(3g) **HOME-BASED PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.** "Home-based private educational program" means a program of educational instruction provided to a child by the child's parent or guardian or by a person designated by the parent or guardian. An instructional program provided to more than one family unit does not constitute a home-based private educational program.

(3r) **PRIVATE SCHOOL.** "Private school" means an institution with a private educational program that meets all of the criteria under s. 118.165 (1) or is determined to be a private school by the state superintendent under s. 118.167.

(7) **SCHOOL BOARD.** "School board" means the school board or board of school directors in charge of the schools of a school district.

(8) **SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR.** "School district administrator" means the school district superintendent, supervising





122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

JOHN ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Senate Education Committee
FROM: Jeff Pertl, Legislative Services Coordinator
DATE: October 18, 2005
RE: Assembly Bill 84, the number of school days required each school term.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards supports AB 84, which would eliminate the requirement that school be held for at least 180 days, but keep the requirement for a minimum number of hours of instruction.

The changing character of today's information and technology-based society is driving new questions about what students should learn. Rather than focus on archaic determinations of seat time, state and federal laws should empower local officials to align resources and unite communities toward a singular vision of student achievement.

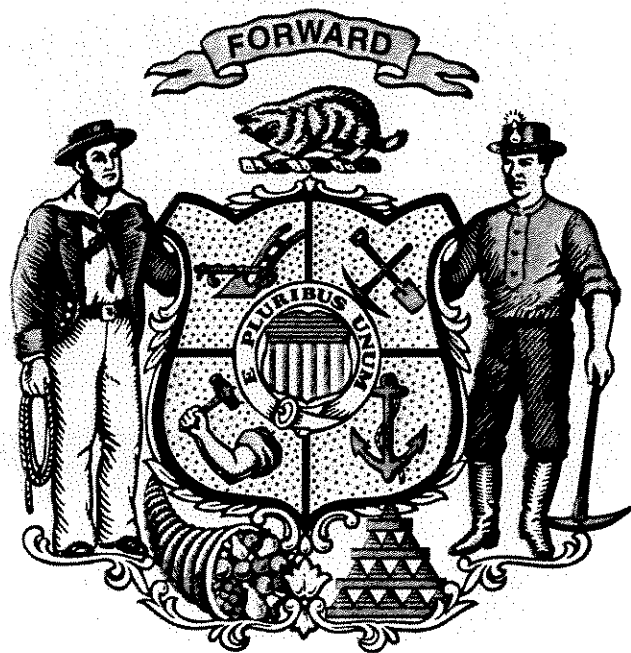
With the adoption of the state model academic standards and standardized assessments and the federal No Child Left Behind Act, school districts have become increasingly accountable for their student achievement results. However, out-dated, input-driven mandates such as the 180-day requirement are still in place, hindering school districts' ability to use their limited resources in the most cost-effective manner possible.

For years, school boards across the state have sought waivers from the Department of Public Instruction to hold school less than 180 days to consolidate half-day teacher in-service sessions or to accommodate other local factors such as building projects or natural disasters. School boards have clearly shown that they are capable of working with their communities in making these decisions. Acquiring state bureaucratic approval is a time-consuming process that is burdensome and unnecessary.

For most school districts, any savings realized under this bill would come primarily from reduced student transportation costs. In some districts, it may be as little as a few thousand dollars, but that may be just enough to save a teacher's job and keep a particular program.

Furthermore, the impact of any school calendar decision on teachers' hours, wages and working conditions is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining and must be negotiated with the local bargaining unit. If a board wants to lengthen the school day and shorten the school year, the impact of that decision must be negotiated and agreed to by the local teachers' union.

AB 84 would give local school boards another tool to use their limited fiscal resources to the best advantage of students. **Please vote yes.** Thank you.



Rep. Debi Towns' testimony on Assembly Bill 84

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the need for Assembly Bill 84.

Under current school law, districts must meet both a day and an hour minimum requirement to be eligible to receive state aid payments. This bill eliminates the minimum requirement of 180 days, but retains the minimum hour requirement.

Let me stress at the onset of this testimony, that this bill does not allow a school district board to reduce the amount of face-to-face instructional hours to be less than current law. Nor does this bill require more or fewer days of attendance for students or teachers.

Many schools districts are finding that the rigid structure of meeting separate day and hour requirements no longer provides the scheduling flexibility that they need to adjust to recent changes such as the start date statute. The concept behind the combination of meeting both a day and hour requirement is also obsolete in the presence of some modern educational models.

Not only is this bill about flexibility of scheduling, but it also offers flexibility for budgeting in a fiscal climate that is forcing local school boards to be more efficient and effective with fewer dollars. If we are expecting school districts to be prudent with their money, then we must also give them the tools to obtain the "best bang for their buck".

The reality is that school boards and administrators are being asked to make decisions between running busses more days or cutting the number teachers; they are being asked to choose between serving more days of hot lunch or laying off library assistants; they are being forced to eliminate gifted and talented programs so that they can run the heat all winter and air conditioning through the middle of June. I think we need to remember that they can only spend each dollar once.

If AB 84 becomes law, it will return the ability to negotiate the local school calendar back to the district's board and teachers, where it belongs. These are the individuals

who know their community's needs. The state's role is to provide a foundation of minimum standards, not to micromanage how many days the school bell rings.

There are legitimate concerns about the state mandate of establishing school start dates. While there is a valid argument to maintain starting public schools in September rather than August, it does create another set of issues. Many public schools in Wisconsin were in session this summer until the third week of June. This negatively affected the length and attendance of many summer school programs. Many families found it forced them to change or abandon their summer plans.

This state is experiencing many challenges, not the least of which is providing adequate revenue for public schools. Right now we have the opportunity to offer the flexibility that is needed by schools and families without diminishing the amount of quality face-to-face time. In fact, less transition time can increase the quality of time in the classroom. In other words, there is always some time lost for coming and going, changing classes, etc. This can reduce that type of loss and actually is the confirming argument that many education experts use to advocate innovative scheduling models.

This bill has no impact on the process by which a local district calendar is established. The contents of this bill would not override existing master contract agreements. Calendar issues will still be driven by negotiation between the local school board and the local teachers union. Scheduled parent teacher conferences and snow day time would continue to be handled in similar respect to current law.

Although there is a waiver process that is currently available, it is intended for extenuating, unexpected circumstances that a school district might experience making it impossible to comply with the 180-day requirement. The waiver process is not for long-range planning or contract negotiations. The decision to allow an exemption is currently at the sole discretion of the State Superintendent of Schools. AB 84 would make this subjective waiver process unnecessary. The ability for the local district to adjust to these unusual, isolated occasions could be handled by the local board without

compromising the amount of teacher – student time. Making these decisions locally will reflect “real-people’s” needs.

In all cases, if and when a district would ever opt for something other than a 180 calendar, it would have to be approved by union ratification. School boards are not going to be randomly changing school schedules. In fact, I cannot stress enough there is nothing in this bill that would stop a district from continuing to maintain a 180 day schedule if that is what suits their community best.

In the past, there have been misleading statements published by the Wisconsin Education Association to its membership that has implied the union would lose negotiation rights. This is absolutely not true. This statement has confused many local WEAC units and perhaps some legislators.

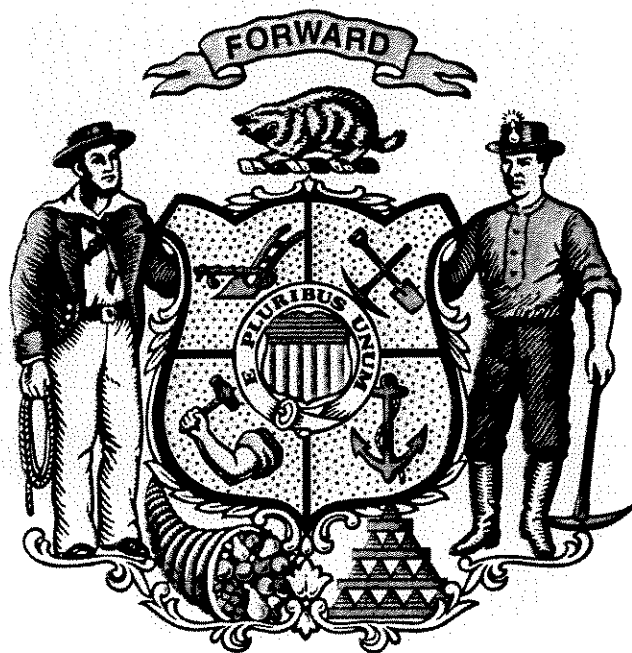
Another argument opposing this proposal would say the bill “takes us in the wrong direction” and that in fact, we should look at requiring longer school years with more time in a public classroom. If these opponents were sincere, they would be proposing legislation to increase the amount of required face-to-face classroom time instead of continually negotiating shorter & shorter contracts. The required number of instructional days has steadily decreased in most districts over the past two decades.

Although there is a lack of agreement in academic literature about the impact that specific school year and/or school day schedules have on student performance, there is an agreement about general relationships. Allocated time (that is, time spent with an instructor) has a direct relationship to achievement. There is **no** consensus, however, that an increased number of days at school has any relationship to performance. Ironically, this is the very argument that has been used by union negotiators at the table when negotiating for a shorter contract.

What I am saying here is that time with the teacher is what counts, and that is what the hour requirement ensures. All the day requirement mandates is 180 bus rides or 180 lunch breaks.

I say here today that we are moving in the right direction when local school boards, local teacher unions, and families within a school district are empowered with a larger framework that offers more options, rather than a Madison mandate which limits them to no option. We are not a one-size-fits-all state. Northern Wisconsin districts might embrace this tool and find it more effective to not bus children and heat their schools during the coldest days of winter. Either way, that is a decision that should be made in Northern Wisconsin, not Madison. Once again, if a change in the school schedule will not work in a community – the community will not support it and they will certainly be heard locally before they are heard in Madison.

I am glad to entertain questions of the committee. Thank you.



Hogan, Rebecca

From: Lipp, Elizabeth
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2005 10:25 AM
To: Hogan, Rebecca
Subject: FW: Testimony clarification for SB 84

From: Telfer, Roni [mailto:rtelfer@wwusd.org]
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2005 10:00 AM
To: Sen.Olsen
Cc: Sen.Darling; Sen.Erpenbach; Sen.Grothman; Sen.Hansen; Sen.Harsdorf; Sen.Jauch; Rep.Towns; Sen.Robson; Sen.Kedzie; Rep.Nass
Subject: Testimony clarification for SB 84

The Honorable Senator Olsen
The Wisconsin State Senate

Dear Senator Olsen,

This letter is to clarify some elements of our testimony yesterday morning to the education committee on Assembly Bill 84. We did not adequately address how our change in the number of days in instructional days in Whitewater impacted the number of hours of instruction. After going back and checking our records we wanted to clarify what we actually did in Whitewater to address the times because it did NOT result in a reduction in actual instructional time.

The six half days that we referred to for use in professional development became 3 full days of instruction and 3 full days of inservice. Before, students were in school for 3.5 hours on each of 6 days. Now they are in school 7 hours on three days. The only change we made in our school start and end times were actually to accommodate bus schedules and had nothing to do with the hours of instruction requirement and resulted in NO reduction of the number of hours. The hours of instruction have essentially remained the same; it is just that consolidating the 6 half days into 3 full days have redistributed the days.

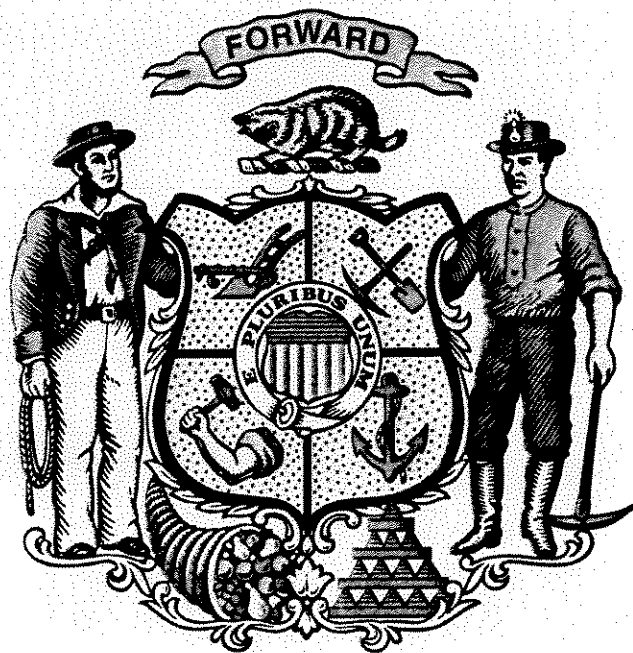
The other element I wanted to clarify is a reaction to the comment that eliminating a specified number of days of instruction "sends the wrong message" about what we expect from schools. When the time and day requirements were instituted we only had input measurements available. There were no standard measures like Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam scores, Model Academic Standards, adequate yearly progress, National Assessment of Educational Progress scores or the school performance report. The statutes enacted at that time could only measure time and require plans to address expected elements like professional development or a remedial reading plan. The audit of the 20 standards was a way to check to see if districts were adhering to the standards of expected input. Today, unlike the situation 20 years ago when the Wisconsin 20 standards were enacted, we have many tools for measuring the outcome of our schools. We no longer need to rely on measuring input; we have outcomes. Every district in the state is focused on addressing the outcomes of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. Every district is concerned about the indicators on the school performance report. Assembly Bill 84 is only seeking some flexibility in how a district arranges time to achieve the already required outcomes. Passage of this bill should send the message that the agreed upon outcomes are what is important and districts have a responsibility to manage their time and resources appropriately to ensure that the outcomes are achieved.

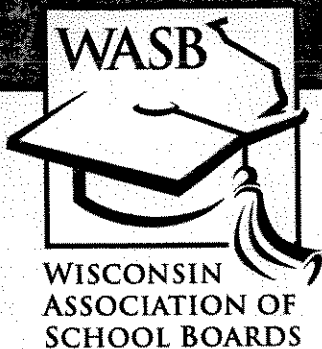
Again, thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

10/19/2005

Sincerely,

Leslie Steinhaus, District Administrator
Veronica Telfer, Curriculum/Staff Development Coordinator
Whitewater Unified School District





122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

JOHN ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Senate Education Committee
FROM: Sheri Krause, Legislative Services Director
DATE: February 7, 2006
RE: Summary of positions

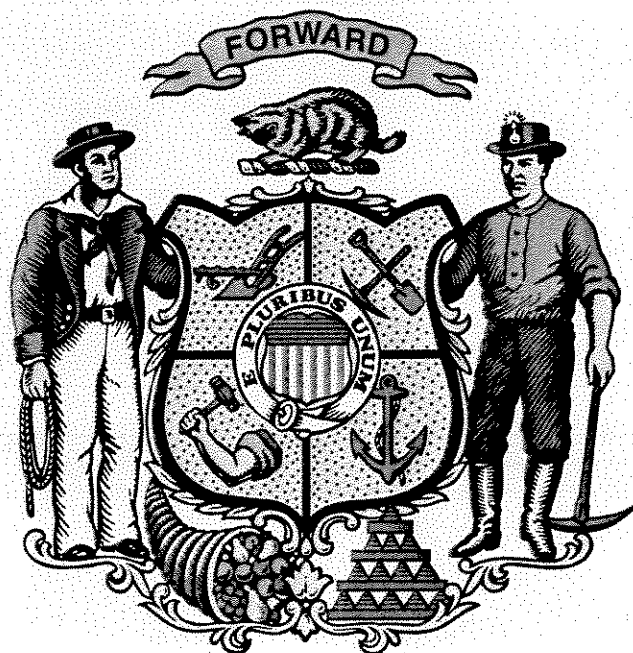
The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) strongly supports SB 519. The WASB will provide supplementary information on AB 700. Thank you for your consideration.

Bill	Description	Position
<u>AB 700</u>	Creates the Autism Scholarship Program and grants rule-making authority.	Opposes
<u>AB 114</u>	Allows school boards and charter schools to establish single-sex schools and courses.	Monitoring
<u>SB 482</u>	Adjusts the calculation of special adjustment aid and revenue limit when territory is detached to create a new school district.	Monitoring
<u>SB 519</u>	Requires an evaluation and longitudinal study of the SAGE Program.	Supports
<u>SB 520</u>	Requires school districts to report the number of hours of pupil instruction.	Monitoring

EXEC SESSION

Bill	Description	Position
<u>AB 84</u>	Provides flexibility on the number of school days required each school term, while maintaining the current hours of instruction required.	Supports*
<u>AB 84 Amend</u>	In addition to the current law minimum requirement of 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction, requires that districts may not schedule less hours than they offered in 2005-06.	Opposes

*The WASB only supports the original bill and will oppose the bill if amended.



Call Peter [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]

AB 84 - Towns 180 day bill

John Eyster / Heather - distributed testimony

↳ School district of Janesville

Walter - What innovative things do you want to do if bill is passed

- half days for inservice - meaningless time
- community concern w/ dismissal

- Whitewater plan more hours than mandate

will days come out of middle of school year?

Defer to Whitewater testimony

Eng - How does the argument give w/ QEO?

Trying to say local control one way not the other
hypocritical

Eyster - responded w/ transportation costs; local control always

Hansen - how do you limit it? How low will you go?

Towns testimony; 1800 hours instead of days

set instructional time; community makes most optimal schedule

follow up - since 1998, 92 requests

Heather - the waiver process is annual, get rid of mandate

Walter - half day is local why are you still doing it?

Mandate on inservice; negotiations w/ union is why half day exists negotiations get in way

Eng - less day longer time - Extracurricular?

Why not longer days? You can do that, community decides

35 hours on Saturdays?

Hansen -

Darling - half day flexibility
Hether - not just that

Jennifer @ DPI - Russ needs copy of testimony
Borden of parents for 4 days a week which
have been some of the request
day and how requirement 175 fee to free time

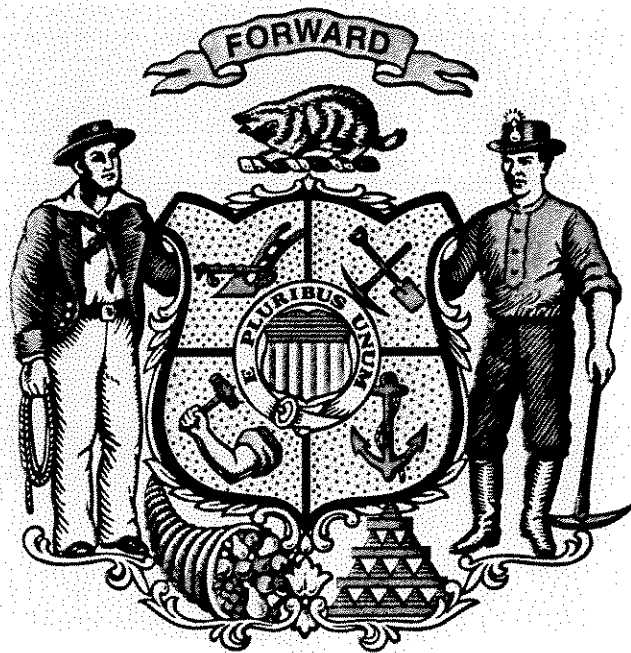
Erg - how would DPI feel about more mandated days
\$ for teachers transportation expensive

Darling - consideration of year round school?
Where are we?
discussions of course but not immediate

Leslie Steinhans & Veronica Tetter - Whitewater
Luther - didn't have to lengthen day at middle school -
3 less days of education?

trying to meet needs of students and staff
needed flexibility for more flexible development
how many contract days with staff! 196

Luther & Erg a few questions -
making the dollar stretch a little further





Monday, January 31, 2005 4:07:06 PM

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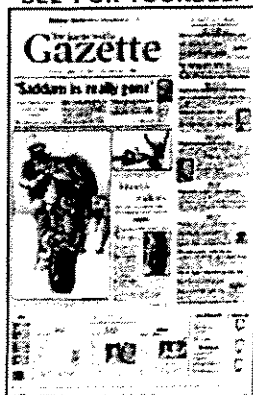
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Thumbs up/down: School day mandate, no-call list, Rx drug reform

(Published Monday, January 31, 2005 12:03:15 PM CST)



To eliminating the mandate of 180 school days. Rep. Debi

Towns, R-Janesville, has reintroduced her bill to eliminate the state requirement that districts must hold classes for at least 180 days each school year. By retaining the minimum number of hours but eliminating the number of days mandate, school boards would have greater flexibility and might find ways to save money. For example, a northern Wisconsin district may opt to add instruction time to each day and eliminate a few days in the dead of winter to save on heating costs. The Whitewater School District has requested a waiver from the mandate, and the Janesville School Board has passed a resolution urging its elimination. The bill also would make it easier for districts to comply with the mandate to start school after Sept. 1 without having the school year stretch so far into the hot days of June. Districts rightfully blame mandates for part of their economic squeeze. Let's erase this one from the blackboard.

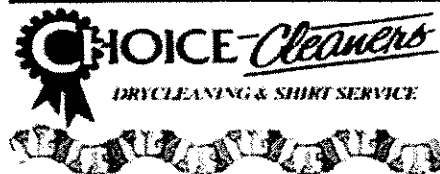


On a proposal to ease Wisconsin's no-call list.

The Federal Communications Commission is considering pre-empting Wisconsin's law with a weaker one. In Wisconsin, companies can only telemarket former customers for one month after service cancellation. The FCC would allow companies to do so for 18 months. Also, under the FCC proposal, if you buy a product from a company, the new law would allow an affiliate company to telemarket any product. Wisconsin law prohibits that. We think Wisconsin's law works just fine the way it is. If you agree, hurry to voice your opinion. You have until Wednesday to register your thoughts on the federal proposal by going to a state Web site, www.datcp.state.wi.us.

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Let local districts dictate school time

Freshman lawmaker Debi Towns has done it again.

Towns, R-Janesville, is a former Edgerton School Board member, former business manager for the Bredhead School District and former school finance consultant with the state Department of Public Instruction. She's putting that experience to good use.

Towns first proposed a bill to give local school boards authority over the Youth Options program, which lets high school students, in certain cases, take college classes at the expense of districts. We strongly endorsed that idea.

We also support, though not as strongly, Towns' bill to eliminate the state requirement that districts must hold classes for at least 180 days each school year. Current law requires a minimum number of days and hours that districts must meet to receive state aids. Towns' proposal retains the minimum hours but would let districts decide how many days to divide them into. Districts still would have to bargain calendar issues with teachers unions.

Stan Johnson, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, criticized the idea, questioning whether younger students could endure longer school days and the wisdom of adjusting the schedules of working families and increasing their day-care costs.

We sympathize with Johnson's concerns but share Towns' faith that each school board will decide what's best for its district. The bill would allow a four-day school week, a concept that was common in the 1970s in rural Western states as a way to trim utility and travel expenses. Ten states, she says, still allow four-day school days, and more are considering law changes to permit them.

But the flexibility goes beyond four-day school weeks. In northern Wisconsin, for example, a district may opt to add instruction time to each day and eliminate a few days in the dead of winter to save on heating costs. A district in an area that depends heavily on tourism might opt for a change that lets teenagers stay employed longer at businesses that cater to vacationers.

While changing the school day won't be right for all districts—in fact, it probably won't be right for most—the bill does eliminate another state mandate. At a time when local school districts are blaming such mandates, in large part, for their economic squeeze, erasing one more from the list on the blackboard feels right.

Towns' proposal retains the minimum hours but would let districts decide how many days to divide them into.

Viewpoint

SCHOOL DAY FLEXIBILITY WELCOME

Two years ago, state Rep. Debi Towns proposed eliminating Wisconsin's 180 school-day mandate, AB 395, as it was known; passed the Assembly's Education Committee and Assembly as a whole, but ended up stalled in a Senate committee.

This spring, a reincarnation of Towns' bill, AB 84, also earned the Education Committee's nod. We certainly hope this version gets further than its predecessor.

Most people know that school districts must meet minimum requirements of both the number of days and hours they meet in order to be eligible to receive state aid payments. Towns' proposal retains the minimum hour requirement that teachers and students must spend in the classroom together but eliminates the minimum requirement of 180 days. Districts still would have to bargain calendars with their teacher's unions.

Like before, the idea is not to give students and teachers less face-to-face contact, but, rather, to provide individual districts with more flexibility in scheduling and budgeting.

There are different ways they might do that. Some districts might choose to reduce the number of days of operation by adding a few minutes to each day, saving on heating, busing and food costs. Going to a four-day school week also is an option, a growing trend in Western and Southern states. Another idea is for districts in northern Wisconsin, for ex-

ample, to take off a week during the coldest part of the winter to save on heating, along with the transportation and staff costs. Obviously, what makes sense for one district might be impractical for others, but districts should at least be able to try new things.

Towns reintroduced her legislation, in part, because of the Whitewater Unified School District's request for a waiver from the DPI to go three days below the 180-day threshold. The district's calendar committee was concerned about six half-days scheduled for teacher training. Students focus less on early-release days and the district often hears complaints from the public about "roaming" students in the afternoons. By the time teachers regroup and get to their training sessions, they often end up with only 2 1/2 hours of quality learning time. By having three full days of training instead, the district could curb the student concerns and save a bit of money on bus transportation and serving school lunch.

The state did approve Whitewater's request, but it took a lot of time and even more red tape. Whitewater is a perfect example of what AB 84 is all about: Making the most of tight tax dollars and giving school districts back the flexibility so they can make decisions based on individual needs and culture. This time, we hope our representatives in Madison follow through.

The Daily Union

opinion page



W.D. HOARD
Founder, 1870

Bring back local control

A proposal by state Rep. Debi Towns caught our attention recently. The Janesville Republican, whose district includes part of Whitewater, has introduced Assembly Bill 395 seeking to eliminate the state's 180 school-day mandate.

Readers probably are aware that currently, school districts must meet minimum requirements of both the number of days and hours they meet in order to be eligible to receive state aid payments. Towns' proposal retains the minimum hour requirement, but eliminates the minimum requirement of 180 days. Districts still would have to bargain calendars with their teacher's unions.

The idea is not to give students and teachers less face-to-face contact, but, rather, to provide individual districts with more flexibility in scheduling and budgeting.

How might they do that? Well, Towns, a former school board member and financial consultant for the Department of Public Instruction, says that some districts might choose to reduce the number of days of operation by adding a few minutes to each day. In the 1970s, the concept of a four-day school week was common in rural Western states as a way to cut transportation and building utility costs. Today, districts in Wyoming, Oregon, South Dakota, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Kansas, Michigan and Louisiana have four-day weeks, and that trend is gaining favor in the South as a way to improve aca-

demics. Ten states still allow four-day weeks, and at least eight others are considering action to do so.

Or perhaps districts in northern Wisconsin could take off a week during the coldest part of the winter to save on heating costs. Last year, the White Lake School District cut 10 days out of the school year's calendar by adding 23 minutes of instruction time each day. It saved up to \$40,000 on heating, busing and food costs, including in the areas of classified employees, cooks, bus drivers and education assistants.

Towns' bill also would make it easier for districts to comply with the inconvenient, tourism industry-friendly state mandate of starting school after Labor Day but not having the school year endure so far into the hot days of June. It would eliminate having to appeal for a state waiver.

To be honest, we doubt Assembly Bill 395 would prompt districts to make drastic changes in their school year schedules, but at least it would give them the power to do so should they choose.

This is not about teaching our children less. It is about making the most of tight education dollars and giving school districts back the flexibility so they can make decisions based on individual needs and culture.

It is about returning local control, something that state mandates like the Labor Day school start date keep taking away.